

Workshop Report

Third Assessment-based National Dialogue (ABND) on the Social Protection Floors (SPFs) in Tajikistan

28 Nov – 1 Dec 2017, Dushanbe



About ABND Tajikistan

The Assessment-based National Dialogue (ABND) is an exercise to assess the social protection system and recommend what needs to be done to provide the Social Protection Floors (SPFs), i.e. minimum social protection, to every person in Tajikistan. It consists of three steps:

1. preparing an assessment matrix on the social protection system of Tajikistan, including identifying gaps and recommendations;
2. converting recommendations into scenarios and costing the scenarios;
3. finalizing the findings and submitting the report to policy makers.

The exercise is conducted through a national dialogue process with the participation of multiple stakeholders such as the government, employers, workers, civil society, international organizations and academia. The stakeholders participate through a Technical Working Group and a High-level Group. At each step of the exercise, the results are discussed and validated by the Technical Group and presented to the High-level Group. The exercise is led by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection and receives technical assistance from the International Labour Organisation.



“This dialogue process helps us to understand the most important developmental issues and challenges we face today and to identify solutions.”

- Ms. Saida Umarzoda,
First Deputy Minister
of Health and Social
Protection

Timeline of ABND Tajikistan



The ABND exercise was launched on 9 February 2017 wherein the Technical Working Group and High-level Group were created. The assessment matrix (Step 1 of 3) was validated by the Technical Working Group at the first ABND workshop in April 2017. It was presented to and endorsed by the High-level Group at the second ABND workshop in May 2017. The assessment matrix contains several recommendations to establish an SPF. Four national priorities were identified among the recommendations and converted into scenarios (Step 2 of 3) by the Technical Working Group at the third ABND workshop in Nov-Dec 2017. Further, the cost of these scenarios was estimated. Going forward, the ABND report will be finalised and submitted to policy makers (Step 3 of 3).

Third ABND workshop: Objectives

The third ABND workshop, held during 28 Nov – 1 Dec 2017, had the following objectives:

1. to identify national priorities among the recommendations;
2. to convert the priorities into practical scenarios;
3. to estimate the cost of implementing the scenarios from 2021 to 2025.

What are Social Protection Floors?

1. access to **essential health care** including maternity care that meets the criteria of availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality;
2. basic income security for **children** enabling access to nutrition, education, care and necessary goods and services;
3. basic income security for **persons of active age** who are unable to earn sufficient income in case of sickness, unemployment, maternity and disability;
4. basic income security for **older persons**.



Third ABND workshop: Agenda

28 November 2017: Meeting of the Technical Working Group

1. Presentation: 'Overview of the social protection system in Tajikistan'
2. Presentation: 'Policy assessment and preliminary costing estimates'
3. Group discussions: 'National priorities for the four SPF guarantees'

30 November 2017: Meeting of the Technical Working Group

4. Voting: 'Selection of national priorities'
5. Presentation and group activity: 'Overview of the ABND costing methodology'
6. Presentation: 'Preliminary scenarios and projected costs'
7. Group discussions: 'Converting national priorities into scenarios'

1 December 2017: Meeting of the High-level Group

8. Opening remarks
9. Presentation: 'Results of the consultations on national priorities'
10. Presentation: 'Results of the consultations on priority scenarios'
11. Dialogue among participants
12. Presentation: 'Consideration of the Recommendation on Extension of SPFs'



28 November 2017: Meeting of the Technical Working Group

1. Presentation: 'Overview of the social protection system in Tajikistan'

Grigorii Degtiarev (Consultant) presented an overview of social protection legislation and schemes existing in Tajikistan for each of the four SPF guarantees. This was followed by a session on assessment of the system.

Quick Facts on Tajikistan (2016)

Population: 8,647,012
Labour force participation: 69%
Unemployment: 2.4%
Poverty: 29%
GDP growth: 6.9%
Minimum wage: TJS 400/month

2. Presentation: 'Policy assessment and preliminary costing estimates'

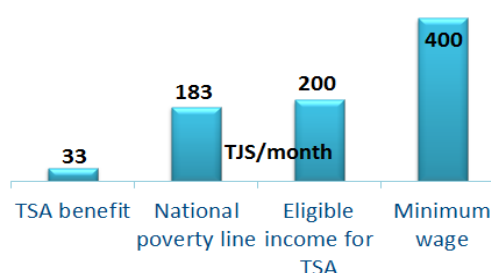
Grigorii Degtiarev and Loveleen De (Consultant) presented an assessment of social protection policies in health care, for children, active age people and older people. A detailed assessment can be found in the assessment matrix. Highlights of the presentation are given below:

Health care

- A law on compulsory health insurance is in place since 2008, but the scheme is yet to be implemented. It will provide basic free health care and medicines to all citizens and more advanced services to those who contribute to the scheme.
- Resources to improve the infrastructure (such as medical facilities, equipment, buildings) and personnel are limited.
- Health care services are guaranteed to certain vulnerable groups of people. However, insufficient financial resources limit their outreach.

Children

- The Targeted Social Assistance (TSA) is a cash benefit of TJS 400 per year distributed to low-income households with children. The benefit amount was assessed to be very low in comparison with the national poverty line. Furthermore, many deserving people do not receive the benefit.
- Free education is guaranteed by the State, resulting in high literacy (99%). Yet, employability remains low. There is a lack of good schools and teachers in rural areas.
- A large number of children (estimated at 21%) engage in child labour.
- There is insufficient information on people, their needs and vulnerabilities. Better coordination, through a single window mechanism, is needed.

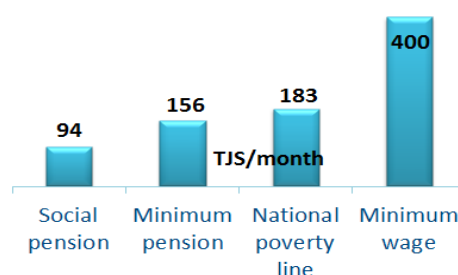


People of active age

- Formal sector workers and registered self-employed persons can contribute to a scheme for sickness, disability, unemployment, funeral, maternity and child birth. However, benefit amounts are low.
- Labour migrants and their families do not have access to social protection. Different mechanisms can be considered to cover them, such as national social protection schemes for migrants or bilateral agreements between Tajikistan and receiving countries.
- Informal and seasonal workers are difficult to identify and reach.
- About 10% of registered unemployed people receive benefits as the mechanism for payment is not regulated.
- People are often not aware of their entitlements.

Older people

- All older people and people with disabilities are entitled to a pension; either a contributory pension or a social pension. Coverage is high (over 90%) but the benefit amount is low. The contributory pension is variable, with a minimum amount of TJS 156 per month. The social pension is TJS 94 per month.



- Older people are entitled to home-based care, inpatient facilities and shelter. They are available free of cost only to people above the age of 80 years.
- The quality of services needs to be improved. Social work is not seen as a favourable job and thereby, it does not attract sufficient and skilled workers.

Valeria Nesterenko (Statistician, ILO HQ) presented preliminary scenarios, based on the assessment matrix, and their projected costs. This was expected to guide the group discussions on selection of national priorities.

Health care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing the per capita State health expenditure from the current US\$ 53.4 to the international average of US\$ 239 Increasing the number of medical personnel from the current 21.1 per 10,000 people to the international average of 41.1
Children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing the Targeted Social Assistance to children aged 0-14 years Providing a cash benefit to all orphaned children Providing a cash benefit to HIV-affected children
People of active age <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing a maternity cash benefit to all women Increasing the unemployment benefit Increasing the disability benefit
Older people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extending the social pension so that all old people are covered



Discussions of the Technical Working Group





3. Group discussions: 'National priorities for the four SPF guarantees'

Members of the Technical Working Group worked in three groups, comprised of (1) government organizations; (2) social partners and civil society; (3) international organizations. Based on the policy assessment and preliminary cost estimates, each of the groups identified two priority recommendations for each SPF guarantee: health care for all, social protection for children, active age people and older people. In total, 24 recommendations were identified, as listed below.

Group 1: Government organizations	Group 2: Social partners and civil society	Group 3: International organizations
Health care		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the compulsory health insurance • Improve access to guaranteed health services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the provision of accessible, affordable, good quality and equitable medical care • Provide free and good quality ambulance services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of medical workers, including family doctors, and increase the salaries of medical personnel • Expand and distribute a package of guaranteed health services to all regions of Tajikistan
Children		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the effectiveness of TSA • Ensure accessible and good quality legal protection services for children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure access to good quality pre-school, school and vocational education as well as healthy nutrition • Increase the size of all social payments and expand coverage to children up to 18 years of age living with pathologies such as HIV, diabetes, tuberculosis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the TSA allowance and coverage (up to 18 years of age) and link TSA beneficiaries to social services needed on a case-to-case basis • Improve the quality and accessibility of education
People of active age		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the amount of the childcare allowance up to two calculated indicators • Increase the unemployment benefit to the level of the minimum wage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guarantee medical and social insurance to labour migrants • Expand maternity benefits to all women including those working in the informal and agricultural sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a pension fund for labour migrants • Expand the coverage of social benefits to include informal workers and boarding school graduates
Older people		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change the mechanism for calculating insurance pensions • Increase the social pension to 80% of the minimum pension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the social pension • Ensure decent and healthy lives through equitable access to health care, pensions, work and social care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the outreach of social services to all elderly people living with psychological disorders and people with disabilities • Increase the number and skills of caregivers, social workers, psychologists, lawyers

4. Voting: 'Selection of national priorities'

Of the 24 priority recommendations identified by the groups, participants were asked to vote for 1 main priority for each SPF guarantee. The following four national priorities were selected:

	✓ Ensure the provision of accessible, affordable, good quality and equitable medical care	✓ Increase the size of all social payments and expand coverage to children up to 18 years of age	
	✓ Expand the coverage of maternity benefits, including the birth grant and child care allowance, to all women	✓ Increase the social pension to 80% of the minimum pension	

5. Presentation and group activity: 'Overview of the ABND costing methodology'

Valeria Nesterenko explained the Rapid Assessment Protocol (RAP), a model used to estimate the costs of scenarios. The RAP uses data on the population, labour force, economic indicators (e.g. GDP, inflation, poverty, unemployment, wages), government expenditures and social protection schemes to estimate the cost of the identified scenarios from 2021 to 2025. The time frame is coherent with the next phase of Tajikistan's social protection strategy (2021-2025), which the ABND process is expected to contribute to.

To understand how the RAP model functions, the Technical Working Group participated in a simulation exercise to calculate the cost of two scenarios.

6. Presentation: 'Preliminary scenarios and projected costs'





Valeria Nesterenko next presented preliminary scenarios, based on the priority recommendations, and their projected costs. The scenarios were modified from Session 2 to reflect the priorities selected by the groups. This was expected to guide the group discussions on selection of priority scenarios.



Groups discussing scenarios and estimated costs

7. Group discussions: 'Converting national priorities into scenarios'

Participants worked in the same three groups, comprised of (1) government organizations; (2) social partners and civil society; (3) international organizations. Based on the national priorities and preliminary cost estimates, the groups identified scenarios. These scenarios represented practical policy options to achieve the four national priorities. They are listed below.

Priority recommendations	Scenarios
 <p>Ensure the provision of accessible, affordable, good quality and equitable medical care</p>	<p>No scenarios were identified, as the health related scenarios require more comprehensive costing tools and are beyond the scope of the Rapid Assessment Protocol.</p>
 <p>Increase the size of all social payments and expand coverage to children up to 18 years of age</p>	<p>Group 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the TSA benefit to the level of monthly poverty line, payable once a quarter • Increase the TSA benefit to the level of monthly poverty line, payable once a month • Increase the TSA benefit to the level of poverty line and for all poor children <p>Group 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the TSA benefit to TJS 600 by 2018 • Increase the TSA benefit to TJS 680 by 2020 • Increase the TSA benefit to TJS 800 by 2025 <p>Group 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the TSA allowance to TJS 600 per month and extend coverage to all families with children aged 0-18 years
 <p>Expand the coverage of maternity benefits, including the birth grant and child care allowance, to all women</p>	<p>Group 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase maternity benefit to 100% of wage for formal workers • Increase the maternity benefit to 100% of minimum wage for officially registered unemployed women • Increase the maternity benefit to poverty line for all other women <p>Group 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the contributory benefit to 100% of wage for duration of 5 months for formal workers • Increase the non-contributory benefit to 100% of minimum wage for duration of 5 months for informal workers <p>Group 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the maternity benefit to the level of the average wage for employed workers • Increase the maternity benefit to the level of the minimum wage for unemployed workers and inactive women
 <p>Increase the social pension to 80% of the minimum pension</p>	<p>Group 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the social pension to 80% of minimum pension <p>Group 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase social pension to 70% of minimum pension by 2018 • Increase social pension to 80% of minimum pension by 2020 <p>Group 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease the retirement age for social pension to 63 for men and 58 for women • Increase the social pension to 80% of the minimum pension

This concluded the meeting of the Technical Working Group. The results of the meeting included:

1. Identification of 24 key recommendations in the area of social protection
2. Identification of four national priorities in the area of social protection
3. Identification of practical scenarios for the priorities
4. Estimated cost of the scenarios from 2021 to 2025

These were presented to the High-level Group the following day.

1 December 2017: Meeting of the High-level Group

8. Opening remarks

Officials of the High-level Group highlighted that the Government of Tajikistan considers sustainable economic development to be of prime importance and the “human factor” to play a primary role in achieving it. National dialogue helps to understand the issues surrounding human development in today’s world and to find solutions. In 2015, the Government of Tajikistan adopted a programme of cooperation on “Improving labour conditions and accelerating social protection of the population”. Its main objective is to improve the living conditions of people and to address other important issues such as providing employment and mobilizing funds for social development.



(Left-Right): Mr. Rahmatulo Faizov, Senior Social Development Specialist of the President’s Office; Ms. Saida Umarzoda, First Deputy Minister of Health and Social Protection; Ms. Pratibha Mehta, UN Resident Coordinator; Mr. Jamshed Yunusov, Chief of Socioeconomic branch of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions

Also present: Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment; Ministry of Finance; Association of Employers; Association of Small and Medium Business; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Economic Development and Trade; UNDP; UNICEF; WFP; IOM; ILO; European Union; JICA; Mercy Corps

9. Presentation: ‘Results of the consultations on national priorities’

Artiom Sici (Social Protection Officer, ILO Tajikistan) explained the methodology followed during the workshop and presented the four SPF priorities to the High-level Group. The oft-asked question of “how to finance social protection” was touched upon through the elaboration of three options that could be explored by Tajikistan, namely redistribution of public expenditures, increase in taxes and expansion of social insurance schemes.¹

The ABND exercise is relevant for the further development of Tajikistan’s social protection system.

- The dialogue methodology and two-level working group structure carry political weight for bringing about social protection reforms.
- The exercise promotes the defining and establishing of minimum levels of social protection which should be safeguarded by everyone.





¹ The full list of options is available at

www.social-protection.org/gimi/gess/RessourcePDF.action?ressource.ressourceId=51537

- It assesses whether the SPF has been achieved and, if not, proposes recommendations for the gradual achievement of the SPF in Tajikistan.
- It estimates the costs of the recommendations and thus provides an evidence base to choose the most important and relevant policy options for the country.

10. Presentation: 'Results of the consultations on priority scenarios'

Valeria Nesterenko presented the scenarios selected by the groups and their estimated costs.

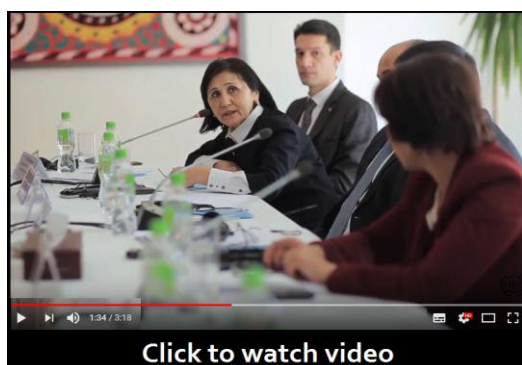
Priority recommendations	Scenarios and their estimated costs
 <p>Ensure the provision of accessible, affordable, good quality and equitable medical care</p>	No scenarios were identified
 <p>Increase the size of all social payments and expand coverage to children up to 18 years of age</p>	The current value of TSA is TJS 400 per year. The scenarios ranged from providing a cash benefit of TJS 800 per year to a benefit equal to the poverty line to all poor children aged 0-18 years.
 <p>Expand the coverage of maternity benefits, including the birth grant and child care allowance, to all women</p>	Women aged 15-49 years and employed in the formal sector receive 140 days of fully paid maternity leave. The scenarios ranged from providing a cash benefit equal to the poverty line to a benefit equal to a nationally-established minimum level to the remaining women aged 15-49 years.
 <p>Increase the social pension to 80% of the minimum pension</p>	Older people who are not entitled to a contributory pension receive a social pension which is equal to 60% of the minimum pension. The scenarios suggested increasing the social pension to 70% or 80% of the minimum pension.

11. Dialogue among participants

Participants from the different agencies provided comments about social protection in Tajikistan and suggestions for improvement. These will be duly incorporated into the assessment matrix.

12. Presentation: 'Consideration of the Recommendation on Extension of SPFs'

Grigorii Degtiarev presented a draft of the Recommendation on "Extension of Social Protection Floors" for consideration by the High-level Group. The draft Recommendation was approved by the Group.



For more information,

Visit the ABND workspace:

www.social-protection.org/gimi/gess/ShowProject.action?id=3053

Contact:

Artiom Sici, Social Protection Officer, ILO Tajikistan
sici@ilo.org